



Seaweed 1992

Marine Parks - Save our Seas

Jan Oliver

Understanding the theme

Our marine environments are under increasing pressures from overfishing, waste and run off from the land, marine pollution, habitat degradation and non sustainable use of the ocean resources. Traditionally conservation in the sea has focused on species rather than habitats or ecosystems. Even though Australia has a variety of land in reserves and parks, it was only recently recognised that there is also a need to protect areas in the sea. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) aim to look after examples of natural, relatively unspoiled marine environments for future generations. They have been set aside to protect marine species and their habitats or cultural features e.g. reefs, seagrass, shipwrecks, atolls, deep-water areas and mangroves. MPAs vary greatly in size and in what type of activities are permitted within the area. This depends on the defined purpose and values of that area.

MPAs have a range of benefits. They can enhance fisheries and threatened species populations by protecting nursery areas or providing refuges. They can provide opportunities for recreation, research, education and monitoring. They can preserve our cultural and historical heritage. They can conserve marine biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

SOS, Save our Seas! We need areas of the oceans protected from human impacts to ensure we have living seas now and forever. Education about MPAs introduces issues of:

- Marine biodiversity - genes, species, habitats and ecosystems
- Sustainable use and management of ocean resources
- MPA plans, regulations and management
- Marine cultural heritage - Aboriginal significance and sites or geological, archaeological and historical values

Exploring the theme - event ideas

Lateral thinking with long term pay-offs - An educator's workshop.

What

Primary and secondary teacher workshop.

Where

Capricornia, Rockhampton Region.

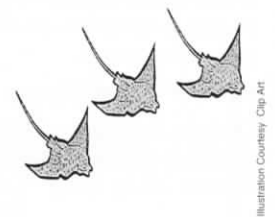
How

Working with the Department of Environment, the local Seaweed Coordinator organised a workshop for teachers. The participants took a one hour flight down the Fitzroy River and out to North West coral cay and the Keppel Island group. Throughout this flight the Department of Environment representative explained the marine park zoning plan.

Why

Just like students, teachers need active learning experiences. Teachers often lack life experiences with the marine environment yet we expect them to teach students enthusiastically. This workshop was planned to provide constructive marine experiences.

The bird's eye view of the marine and coastal zone from the catchment to the sea aimed to inspire and educate the educators. It introduced the teachers to current and local marine issues. By developing their interest, awareness and understanding of these issues, the teachers were provided with a very valuable tool for teaching marine education.





Students snorkelling North West Island Marine Park

Illustration Courtesy Wet Paper

Extending the theme - classroom activities

Studying Marine Protected Areas

Defining MPAs

Research Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). What are they? What do they protect? How do they protect? Find out what MPAs there are in your state or the whole of Australia. Ask students to work in groups and provide a profile of one MPA. Display these studies or present the information to the whole class.

Field Trips

Visit a MPA with a ranger or local guide. Visit again at a different time of day or season eg nocturnal crab watch, full moon high tide.

Talks and Discussion Panels

Develop talks and discussion panels with experts, conservation groups, marine park officers, local users, government officers, local shire councils. Invite them to your school or ask each one to answer a list of questions about MPAs and compare the results.

Library Displays

Set up a library displays of books on MPAs in Australia and the marine life in them.

Create Jigsaw Puzzles

Create jigsaw puzzles on MPAs. Collect calendars, photographs and posters to cut up into puzzles. Put the puzzles in the library or give to a junior class to use.

Educate Through Dance

Devise a kelp dance, crab dance or octopus dance in costume. Perform. Introduce the show with explanation of the marine plant or animal and where it can be found.

Supermarket Safari

Do a supermarket study, find all the products with labels advertising protect the sea, environmentally friendly to the sea, dolphin safe etc. Then research the country of origin and the issues concerned.

Zoned Areas in Action

Study one MPA, find out about zoning, regulations etc. Set the classroom up with zoned areas and monitor and discuss the conflicts and issues arising.

Model MPAs

Build models of MPAs using various materials. Create the land forms and habitats. Show where different plants and animals live.

Link up Flyways

Do a bird watch at a local beach or waterway, record findings. Determine how many are migrants and where their flyways go. Find out if they visit MPAs. Try linking up with another school in a different state that is also on their migration route.



Illustration by Elise Durbridge

Invent a MPA

Invent a protected local area eg school yard, lake, creek or beach. Monitor it, find out what habitats, fauna and flora it contains. Discover how people use the area. Map, devise zones and plan regulations.

Funny Messages

Draw cartoons on a MPA theme. Publish in the school newsletter or local paper.

Media Review

Do a media review of violations of MPAs eg oil spills, pest plants and animal invasions, land run off issues, coastal development etc. Make clippings into a display with further information.

Learn with Videos

Borrow videos about MPAs, ask the managers of the area closest to you. Or hire videos about the amazing marine life in our Australian oceans. Research where these plants or animals live and determine if they have some protected habitats.

MPAs in Australia and Overseas

Study features of different MPAs in Australia and then compare with overseas ones. Try an internet search.

Student pledge

Ask the students to draw up a code of behaviour or pledges regarding care of MPAs. Are the students prepared to swear to the pledge?

Personal Actions

Extending the theme through Educational Resources

The whole community benefits from marine protected areas:

- Make your voice heard in the protection and management of marine and coastal areas.
- Visit marine parks and find out the important role they play in protecting marine communities.
- Do not disturb shell middens, rock art, relics or shipwrecks and other important parts of our cultural heritage.
- Find out about ways to reduce damage to reefs when snorkelling and boating.

Conservation tips



(From Power Boating Workbook - Wet Paper 1999)

- Keep oil and fuel out of the sea by maintaining equipment in good working order.
- Stow it don't throw it — make sure all items of rubbish or potential rubbish are stowed in bags or containers that can be returned to rubbish bins at home.
- Pack your boat for minimal rubbish. For example sugar in a resealable water proof plastic container instead of sugar in a disposable bag. Plastic bags in the sea look just like jelly fish and choke baby turtles to death
- Slow down in turtle protected zones. In many marine parks, turtle protection zones have been identified as areas for special consideration in conservation. Many turtles die each year from being hit at high speeds by power boats.
- Anchors wreck coral reefs and seagrass beds. If you can do boating activities such as fishing while drifting with the tide, it will help save valuable habitat.
- Motor up to anchors and then lift them, don't use the motor to drag the anchor out.
- Know the tides and navigation marks - don't dig up sea grass beds through lack of knowledge at low tide